



HOLDING SPACE



FOREWORD

Portable textiles are often used in art to suggest impermanence or ephemerality, but artists who work with cloth are keenly aware of its strength, durability, and flexibility: it can drape, bundle, and wrap around and between objects, people, and spaces. Many artists consider the relationship between material and meaning by exploring the link between textiles and architecture: structural forms used to delineate spaces. Fred Sandback's yarn drawings use materialized lines to interrupt our perceptions of dimensionality and perspective. Eva Hesse allows the grid to slump and droop and the flat surface to bloat and sag, creating sculptural forms whose behaviours depend on the support of ceilings, walls, and floors. Do Ho Suh's *348 west 22nd street* meticulously recreates the interior of a former residence out of colourful translucent fabric, from walls and doorways to electrical outlets and smoke detectors, conveying his understanding of "home" as elusive and intangible. Anne Wilson's *To Cross (Walking New York)* responds to the history of the Drawing Center's building, the former home of the Positive Motion Loom Company, by methodically performing the winding of a warp around four columns in the gallery. The months-long accumulation of movement and material resulted in

an imposing thread wall, a bold intervention delicately suspended by the tension of each individually placed thread.

Inspired by these inquiries into the relationship between textiles and architectural spaces, the members of the Fibres Student Association at Concordia University sought to further explore these ideas by organizing the group exhibition *Holding Space*. Art students from across Canada who work in (or near) fibres and material practices were invited to consider how textiles might conceal, contain, divide, or reveal.

Amanda Wood seeks to create boundaries both actual and fluid by using woven and non-woven areas “to show the interior and exterior of an enclosed space.” Sophia Borowska’s *Scaffold* exposes the temporary support needed for the building of textiles—the loom—and calls attention to the crucial and precise function of tension during the construction process. Other pieces highlight the transformative potential of fabric and fibres processes. Emily Karcz manipulates textiles to capture subtleties of colour, tone, and light. In *Draped Spaces*, she explores “cloth’s ability to surround and retain foreign shapes.”

Justin Somjen considers the protean meaning of materials—in this case, the ubiquitous black camera bag, once used to protect light-sensitive film, whose familiar form persists in spite of its obsolete function. Not only do textiles themselves contain meaning, they can be used “as tools to demonstrate specific ideas and visions,” as Catherine Faiello does with the strategic use of fabric in her performances. In his project *benign binding (mask)*, Edwin Isford plays with historic portraiture; rather than

providing visual indicators of individuality, a hyper-accumulation of clothing is used as “a veil” of ambiguity. Misca Birklein-Lagassé interrogates the value systems that create material hierarchies by replicating disposable functional items—a mop, astro-turf, etc.—using “precious” fibres like silk and merino wool. Displayed as reverently as any museum piece, these works also question the hierarchical divisions of the gallery space.

Other artists in the show pursue the narrative and metaphorical content embedded in textiles. In *The Cloak, the parachute, the shell, the maze*, Emma Sise alludes to the traveler’s cloak as a “protective veil and container of experience,” yet the formal dualities she employs break apart an oppositional understanding of interior and exterior. Her piece reminds us that even though we exist as bodies moving through space, we nonetheless collect experiences and gain insights that surpass physical boundaries.

I have been fortunate to see this exhibition take shape over the past several months, and I thank these young artists for their amazing vision and energy. Through their work, I have gained renewed inspiration and powerful insights into the present and future of Fibres.

Surabhi Ghosh

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ORGANIZED BY
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY'S
FIBRES STUDENT ASSOCIATION

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition *Holding Space*, a Canada-wide fibres student exhibition hosted by Espace Fibre from April 20-25, 2015 in Montreal, Quebec.

The FSA is excited to bring together fibres communities across the country to create a wider network of support and communication, and to offer students the opportunity to participate in a juried exhibition with their peers.

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All photos provided by the artists.

Printed by Marquis in Montreal

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AMANDA GRESIK



Amanda Gresik fell in love with weaving and whitework embroidery in her second year at OCAD University.

To her, the methodical, calming and therapeutic qualities of these techniques are the most appealing part of the process, as weaving becomes akin to writing in a personal journal. In this way, Gresik aims to use these traditional techniques to see how they can mimic and feel like the handwritten form. Her work stems from personal narrative, exploring themes of illness, relationships, and loss, with weaving acting as the central mode of expression of these themes.

Sometimes I feel like we're [just] roommates... explores the intimate relationship of a newlywed couple, and the pain and distance illness can create between the two of them. It also explores intentional censorship—putting oneself at an emotional and physical distance from others (and from one's spouse), to protect oneself from the pain and difficulty they may be experiencing.

Gresik grew up in Ottawa, and is currently in her fourth year at OCAD University.





AMANDA WOOD



In 2014, Amanda Wood graduated with a diploma of textile art from Capilano University, earning distinction through awards from the Craft Council of BC and alumni, and currently works from her home studio in Vancouver, BC. As a contemporary weaver, she is inspired by urban environments and by current Japanese and historic Bauhaus weaving by using line, space and texture to explore materiality, found geometries, and pattern.

Working with fluid boundaries, Wood's intention with this piece was to show the interior and exterior of an enclosed space simultaneously. The randomly placed woven and non-woven areas create balance. Tensioned threads provide stability, albeit in a fragile, seemingly temporary sense. Much like the threads between siblings, partners, friends, spouses, balance is dependent on consistency or repetition and the even distribution of weight. Breathing space and commonalities are discovered within interstitial spaces despite the necessary tension.

GATHERNE FAIELLO



Originally from Aurora, Ontario, Faiello is currently enrolled in Studio Arts at Concordia University.

Interested in bringing awareness and provoking discussion around themes that are sometimes viewed as taboo, Faiello's artwork addresses social norms, femininity, and the role of humanity within a Western context. Textiles and the body are used as tools to demonstrate specific ideas and visions that are engaged through live performance.

Colours is a performance where an audio piece is played while Faiello is hidden beneath a sphere-shaped "blanket" of light brown silk that gradually becomes colourful. The audio piece is a compilation of cut-and-pasted news reports describing the environmental damage in certain developing countries due to the presence of textile industries. The silk blanket acts as an inadequate protection and conservation device for the Earth against harmful dyes and chemicals.





EDWIN ISFORD



Edwin Isford, born 1985 in Edmonton, Alberta, is currently completing an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts at Concordia University.

benign binding (mask) is a work that resulted from dressing a performer with all of the collared shirts he had in his wardrobe. The ephemeral quality of the performance was intervened upon with photography as a means to fix the body and clothes into a representation of ambiguous anthropomorphic shape that denies the viewer corporeal cues that are typically used to decode identity vis-à-vis portraiture. Clothing becomes a tool to veil its wearer's individuality and sex. This specific work is paired with other performances for camera concerned with the relationship between body and garment.

In addition to clothing, the artist has developed a practise which is centred around making art from research into specific cultural, psychological, and medium-based points of interest. Such investigations have most recently included topics of interest such as bodybuilding and the photo studio.

EMILY KARCZ



Born and raised in Mississauga, Ontario and currently studying Fibres & Material Practices at Concordia University, Karcz is a visual artist working with textiles through methods of sculpture, collage, and painting. Working to create sculptural forms with the exploration of the formal properties of cloth, she coaxes its malleable qualities. With a strong attention to colour theory and tonal gradation, Karcz's work suggests the understanding of objects through the transformative quality of textiles.

Draped Spaces is a series of sculptures that enter the layer between physical and imagined spaces within reality. They explore a textile's ability to surround and cradle objects, leaving an imprint from a space that once was held. Pursuing these transformations in cloth through drapery, we can observe the intricacy of the folds as well as cloth's ability to surround and retain foreign shape. The use of machine made, sterile, non-descript forms are obscured in their nature with the malleable and romantic qualities of drapery. Extruding from the walls and hanging in space, these works distort the perception of gravity and displace the objects they encapsulate into an abstracted reality.





EMMA LIGHTSTONE



Born in Toronto, Emma Lightstone currently lives in Montreal, where she is completing a BFA in Studio Arts at Concordia University. Lightstone's practice reaches across disciplines to include drawing, video, sound recordings, textile practices, and participatory interventions. Her work frequently employs processes of cataloguing and classification, oral histories, and fictitious narratives.

In *Hanky Project*, six handkerchiefs were handwoven and distributed to six participants along with documentation kits. Participants were asked to use the handkerchiefs as they saw fit over the course of a week and to document their uses of them. Participants then washed the handkerchiefs and returned them along with gathered documentary materials. These items are now displayed in a suitcase / specimen case.

The work investigates the circulation and recuperation of (queer) desiring practices and the narrative lives of small objects. It evokes the vexation of capturing fleeting moments, the abject traces of bodies, and the discomfort of besmirching beautiful items. In exploring the disciplinary effects of archival practices on personal intimacies, the work considers how such legibilities might be frustrated or subverted. Is there a poetics of opacity in re-telling?

EMMA SISE



The Cloak, the parachute, the shell, the maze was made with two indistinct and unrelated ideas in mind: a) parachute and b) flux of pattern. The piece acts as an abstracted cloak, which holds connotations of the journey of the traveler and acts as a protective veil and container of experience, while interacting directly with the space surrounding it via the ropes that hold it in space. The duality between surface and lining, tension and slackness, and closing and opening serve to express a balance between interior and exterior worlds.

Working mainly within the realm of fibre and textiles, Sise is engaged first and foremost with the tactility of materials and the expressiveness of image and pattern.

Influenced by a wide-ranging and ever-changing body of conceptual and art-historical research, references are abstracted and subtle. Through printing, dyeing, weaving, sewing, collage, as well as the deconstruction of these elements, each piece is an expression of the instability of symbols and signs in the spectacle of material culture.

Born in Montreal, raised in Vancouver, and presently living again in Montreal, Sise is completing a BFA at Concordia University in Fibres/Material Practices and Art History.





JERA MACPHERSON



Jera MacPherson is a double major in Art History and Studio Arts at Concordia University.

Her intention is to blend art history research with art creation in exploration of an art as research practice and vice versa. Amidst the often cerebral focus of academia, tactile learning provides equally important lessons in close relation to memory and the body. Materiality has much to offer art history, just as art history provides a powerful conceptual tool (one rife with problematics that need undoing on both ends). With this in mind, craft- and process-based endeavours hold an appeal to sensorial learning.

Vesselcular Accretions 1 brings together the vessel-making traditions of both ceramics and basketry. The material properties of both vessels are central, as their combination accents the similarities and differences in the way clay and reed are both employed as vessel makers. In this instance, ceramic coil building and basket twining mirror each other. The tapered shape of these vessels reduce their functionality, but in a sense both vessels contain the other in a material exchange.

She hails from Regina, Saskatchewan.

JUSTIN SOMJEN



Historically, photography has not been discussed often with textile-based designations. It wasn't until the materiality of the photograph became relevant that one would see a huge amount of textile associations with the medium. Whether in the weaving through a photograph with a needle, or even large-scale textile projects that required the necessary documentation that photography offered, photography's role in textiles has increased.

Recently, Justin Somjen began playing with this notion and looked towards a more practical association: camera bags. Their purpose to block out light with their total blackness, their protective and quilted arrangement, and their functional and durable materiality are all qualities that he takes interest in. In these works, he disassembled their fabricated structure and reassembled them to mimic a kind of abstract lens, or aperture. The works (*Black Hole* pictured) reflect the notion of blackness in photography, as a protector from light, losing its place in the world with the disappearance of darkrooms for our computer screens, but still with us in the presence of this black fabric.

Born and raised in Vancouver, Somjen is a recent graduate of Ryerson University's photography program.





MADISON POTTER



Madison Potter was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is currently studying for a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Alberta College of Art + Design with a concentration in Fibre. She is interested in the incorporation of metal in textiles and the overall change in the hand of the fabric when different materials are included.

Consisting of a series of three hand-woven textiles, *First Sight* is focused on materiality and process.

All of the textiles were woven with a raw silk wrapped stainless steel, which confronts the usually ridged form that stainless steel takes on and adapts it into a transparent material. The adaptation of process in order to work with the restraints of the material creates a fabric with subtle fragility and sculptural strength.

The work is a fleeting part of the space it occupies and is presented draped in space, allowing the viewer to experience the lightness of the piece and remember that the work is a textile.

MISCA BIRKLEIN-LAGASSÉ



Malibu Barbie Rona Reno considers what type of object merits the status for display, and how its classification requires a particular space for display. The sculpture consists of a series of copies of objects purchased at suburban hardware stores—a mop, an AstroTurf carpet and insulation. Their functional, disposable and recognizable form conceals the value of the materials used to create them.

The sculptural components, made of silk, alpaca and merino wool, are left in space as if waiting for use.

Misca Birklein-Lagassé was born in Halfmoon Bay, BC. Her interests lay in replication, material culture and its value or lack thereof. She is in her third year of her Bachelors of Fine Arts at Concordia University.





SOPHIA BOROWSKA



Sophia Borowska is a sculptor and installation artist born in Vancouver, BC, and a BFA candidate at Concordia University. Through fibre-structures processes and architectural materials, theories and aesthetics, her current work deconstructs the symbolic values and material qualities of architecture and textiles.

Scaffold addresses these questions by distilling both down to their building blocks.

The idea of a scaffold is reminiscent of looms—structures necessary to the construction of a weaving that are removed once the textile is finished. Two frame-frames, used both for their industrial aesthetic and in reference to their former utility as textile scaffolds, are wrapped with pink rope, forming a cage. *Scaffold* plays with tension, looseness, verticality, containment, and a certain sense of danger, with the heavy, awkward cube of cement hanging from two thin strands in proximity to viewers' bodies. The space contained within the pink scaffold is delimited, appearing more empty and pure in contrast with the electric yellow rope and gritty cement.

VAUGHAN MACMILLAN



Weighted Landscape is an interior and emotional landscape. It interrupts the landscape it is put in by protruding off of the wall into the viewer's space. When confronted with this work it embodies the shape of a human form. *Weighted Landscape* is both full and empty. Both pieces flip back and forth between a heavy or light object. *Weighted Landscape* is an object that also plays with the idea of public and private spaces. These sculptural works contain their own absence.

Born and raised in Calgary, Alberta, Macmillan is a textile artist in the Fibre department at Alberta College of Art & Design. His work explores ideas around memory and loss, presence and absence, trace within an object, embodiment and narrative. He works primarily with found fabrics, or hand-dyes his own.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jurors

Surabhi Ghosh

Concordia Fibres and Material Practices

jake moore

Artist, curator, and cultural worker

Chloé Grondeau

Diagonale Centre des arts et des fibres du Québec

Funding Provided By

Concordia University Dean's Office

&

Concordia's Fine Arts Student Alliance



Thank you to

the Fibres Department at Concordia University

&

Valérie Walker at Espace Fibre

&

all of the members and supporters of
the Fibres Student Association

